

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

" The Sienese ambassadors are coming to your Holiness, and, if there are any folk in the world who can be caught with love, these are they. And, therefore, I pray you to strive to take them with this hook. Accept their excuses for the fault which they have committed, for they are sorry for it, and it seems to them that they are in such a position that they know not what to do. I beseech you, sweet babbo mine, if you see any way by which they could satisfy your Holiness without their being involved in war with those with whom they are allied, you would be pleased to adopt it. Bear with them, for the love of Christ crucified. I believe that, if you do this, it will be a great boon for Holy Church and obviate much evil."¹ The Pope received them kindly for Catherine's sake, but would only answer in generalities—with the result that the ambassadors doubted his pacific intentions, and concluded that he meant to hold Talamone as a pledge for the loyalty of the Sienese in his coming campaign for the reconquest of the Papal States.

The three Florentine ambassadors arrived in Rome on January 26. They were Pazzino Strozzi, Alessandro dell' Antella, and Michele Castellani—the same three who had been to Avignon—and they bore a mandate to congratulate the Pope and to treat for peace. Gregory received them kindly, but would only offer practically the same terms as before : they must pay an indemnity of more than a million florins to the apostolic treasury within four years, and virtually abandon their colleagues in the league.² The indemnity was more than excessive, and an appalling event, that happened a few days later, enabled the

¹ Letter 285 (14), amended *by* the Harleian MS. The ambassadors were Andrea di Conte, Giovanni Vincenti, and three others. Cf. O. Malavolti, pp. 143p., 144, and the *Cronica Sanese*, col. 252. On November 25 (1376), the Signoria of Florence had requested the Sienese to suspend the sending of the ambassadors, as the time was at hand in which all the confederates were to meet to consider the general utility of the league. Gherardi, *op. cit.*, doc. 321.

³ Gherardi, *op. cit.*, pp. 71, 72. St. Antoninus states (III. p. 384) that the Pope had written from Corneto to the Florentines, bidding them send him the same ambassadors that had been to Avignon ; but there is documentary evidence that they had been already appointed in November.